



BERNALILLO COUNTY

COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

To: Karen Ziegler, Director

From: Fran Pllum, Watch II Supervisor *FP*

Date: February 1, 2010

Ref: Review of 2009 Complaint File

In accordance with CALEA Standard 1.4.11 and Bernalillo County Communications S.O.G. Sect. 2.5.6, I have reviewed all complaints filed with the agency for the calendar year 2009.

This report takes an in-depth look at the complaints investigated in order to ensure personnel are well trained and follow department directives, that staff provides professional service and investigations are conducted in a timely, fair and impartial manner. This report also attempts to determine trends in both conduct and performance that can be mitigated before they cause significant problems or expose the Communications Department and our client agencies to increased risks.

General Overview

- There were 26 complaints filed with the Communications Department during this reporting period.
- Complaint origination is as follows:
 - a) 34.61% filed by Bernalillo County Sheriff's Dept. personnel
 - b) 38.46% filed by Bernalillo County Fire Dept. personnel
 - c) 19.23% filed by citizens
 - d) 7.70% filed by other Bernalillo County departments' personnel
- Supervisory, quality assurance and management staff investigated complaints in 2009. The information provided on the next page depicts the number of complaints investigated by each supervisor or manager, the number of complaints that were substantiated or unsubstantiated, and the percentage of time the 24-hour goal was met to complete the investigation and notify the complainant of the outcome.



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Complaint Investigated By:	# of Complaints Investigated	# Substantiated	# Unsubstantiated	% completed within 24 hrs
Bud Lake	1	1	0	100%
Karen Ziegler	1	1	0	100%
Stacy Lewis	4	3	1	100%
Thomas Kenton	1	1	0	100%
Fran Pllum	3	2	1	100%
Martha Tafoya	1	1	0	100%
Cathie Gutierrez	5	4	1	100%
Jared Sanchez	10	6	4	100%

- During the review period, the Bernalillo County Communications Department maintained approximately 40 employees at any given point including fully-trained dispatchers, dispatchers-in-training and dispatch supervisors. Of these 40 individuals, the following is a breakdown of the number of complaints filed against the Communications Dept. staff:
 - a) 65% (26) of the dispatch staff had **NO** complaints filed against them
 - b) 12.5% (5) of the dispatch staff had **1** complaint filed against them
 - c) 17.5% (7) of the dispatch staff had **2** complaints filed against them
 - d) 2.5% (1) of the dispatch staff had **3** complaint filed against them
 - e) 2.5% (1) of all complaints made against an unspecified dispatcher
- Of the 26 complaints filed, 73.07% (19 complaints) were determined to be substantiated and 26.93% (7 complaints) were determined to be unsubstantiated. There were no complaints investigated where the findings resulted in an indeterminate conclusion.

Substantiated Complaints

- Of the 19 complaints determined to be substantiated, there were two areas that best categorize the reasons the complaint was filed. They are as follows:



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- a) 15 of the 19 complaints substantiated were a direct result of a Bernalillo County Communications Dept. dispatcher failing to follow an established department directive.
 - b) 4 of the 19 complaints substantiated were attributed to the dispatcher behaving in an unprofessional or rude manner to a citizen.
- One of the substantiated complaints resulted in the employee receiving a written reprimand.
 - Three of the substantiated complaints resulted in the employee receiving a verbal counseling/reprimand
 - Fifteen of the substantiated complaints resulted in the supervisors meeting with the dispatchers involved to discuss the employees' actions and how those actions could cause injury to citizens, deputies or fire personnel. It was also discussed how their actions and decisions could open the department up to liability and other legal issues. In addition, the employees were reminded that these types of complaints reflect badly on the Bernalillo County Communications Dept.

Unsubstantiated Complaints

- Of the 7 complaints determined to be unsubstantiated, there were two areas that best categorize the reason the complaint was filed. They are as follows:
 - a) Two of the unsubstantiated complaints were from callers who felt the dispatcher had been rude to them.
 - b) Five of the unsubstantiated complaints were from Sheriff's Dept. or Fire Dept. personnel who thought there had been a miscoding of calls or a delay in dispatch.

Trends/Patterns Discovered and Recommended Corrective Actions

- Failure to Follow an Established Department Directive
78.94% of the substantiated complaints were due to the dispatcher failing to follow an established department directive.

Trends and Patterns

- a) 15 of the 19 substantiated complaints were due to the dispatcher not following an established directive. The majority of these errors were



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made by non-probationary, experienced employees. Only a small fraction of the errors were made by probationary employees or employees who were still in training and assigned to a CTO. The mistakes ranged from very minor errors to errors of a more serious nature. For example, in one incident the dispatcher failed to correctly broadcast offender information and other pertinent information regarding an armed robbery that had just occurred.

Recommended Corrective Action

Upon reviewing the substantiated complaints filed with the Communications Department, it is recommended that the dispatchers receive additional in-service training regarding dispatch protocols and procedures paying close attention the areas that appear to have been targeted by the complaints. This would include dispatchers correctly logging information into the CAD systems, correct and updated information being given to responding field units and calls being accurately coded for dispatch.

- Complaints of Rudeness

23.07% (6) of all complaints filed concerned a dispatcher exhibiting rudeness to the caller.

Trends and Patterns

- a) 66.66 % (4) of the 6 complaints filed for rudeness were substantiated. Three of the substantiated complaints involved a dispatcher being rude to a citizen. The fourth substantiated complaint was in regards to a dispatcher being rude to a Sheriff's deputy over the radio.
- b) 33.34% (2) of the rudeness complaints were unfounded. It is not uncommon for a citizen to complain that a dispatcher was rude to them especially if the caller did not receive the service they requested for one reason or another.

Recommended Corrective Action

After completing a review of the rudeness complaints, it is recommended that the entire staff of the Communications Dept. receive additional and/or on-going training on call handling expectations and customer service skills.



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- Number of Complaints Filed

This is the first year that we have reviewed and documented our yearly complaints. With only one year of data compiled, there is not enough information gathered to determine any trending in the number of complaints investigated per year. With continued annual reporting any trends should be spotted within the next few reporting periods.

General Recommendations

Upon completing the first annual review of the complaints filed against our department, there were a few areas of our documentation practices that could be improved for more accurate recording. The Supervisors Monthly Complaint Log needs to include a column to document which employee the complaint has been made against. A column also needs to be added where we can better document what action, if any, has been taken with the specified employee. A third new column should be added to include the date that the investigation was completed. Although we complete almost all, if not all, investigations within the 24-hour goal, there may be the occasion where the investigation will take longer. To keep accurate records we need to have the information documented. By adding these areas on to the log, we will be able to report our findings in this annual report more accurately.

Conclusion

The agency conducts investigations in a professional and impartial manner. There were no patterns to indicate the targeting of employees by manager, supervisors or personnel from our client agencies. There were also no patterns indicating that employees are not being held accountable for their actions.

In each case, the correct action administered by the agency was consistent with the corrective actions outlined in the Bernalillo County S.O.G Sect. 3.26, Bernalillo County Rules and Regulations Sect. 600 and Article 13 of the Bernalillo County White Collar Labor Management Agreement. The corrective actions taken also appear to be consistent with the department's policy to administer the most positive and least punitive corrective measures likely to correct the problem.